

BIRDS AT ANT SWARMS IN KENYA AND SOUTHERN SUDAN

Although there is much literature concerning birds associating with army ants (tribe Ecitonini) in the Neotropical region (see Willis & Oniki 1978 for a review), there appears to be little published relating to this behaviour in the Afrotropical region.

While bird-watching in Lotti Forest (southern Sudan), Kakamega Forest (western Kenya), and in coral-rag forest at Gedi Ruins (coastal Kenya), I was able to watch 12 species of birds at driver ant (tribe Dorylini) swarms. Altogether ant swarms were observed on six occasions, and each time a number of birds of several species were seen to be foraging in association with the swarm. All ant swarms were observed for a minimum period of 30 min.

Due to the dense understorey at Lotti and Kakamega, it cannot be certain that all individual birds at the swarms were detected. At the same time, it was difficult to assess the area covered by the ant swarms at every location, but all were at least 5 m long in one dimension. Table 1 documents all the sightings of birds observed foraging at ant swarms which were considered to be associating with the ants and benefitting from doing so.

TABLE 1

Birds recorded at ant swarms. Ant swarms located as follows: S=Lotti Forest, K=Kakamega Forest (four separate swarms), G=Gedi Ruins. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of individuals present at the swarm. Empty brackets indicate that the species was present at the locality, but absent from the swarm. Dashes indicate that the species was absent from the locality. Species only seen briefly are excluded

Species	Swarm (number of individual birds)					
	S	K1	K2	K3	K4	G
Grey-chested Illadopsis						
<i>Kakamega poliothorax</i>	-	()	()	(2)	()	-
Scaly Babbler						
<i>Turdoides squamulatus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	(4)
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul						
<i>Andropadus latirostris</i>	()	(1)	()	()	()	-
Bristlebill						
<i>Bleda syndactyla</i>	(1-2)	(2)	(1)	()	()	-
Nicator						
<i>Nicator chloris</i>	()	-	-	-	-	(1)
Brownbul						
<i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>	-	-	-	-	-	(1-2)
Brown-chested Alethe						
<i>Alethe poliocephala</i>	(1)	(3)	(4-5)	(1)	(3)	-
Blue-shouldered Robin Chat						
<i>Cossypha cyanocampter</i>	()	()	()	(1)	()	-
Red-capped Robin Chat						
<i>Cossypha natalensis</i>	(1-2)	-	-	-	-	(3)
White-tailed Ant Thrush						
<i>Neocossyphus poensis</i>	-	()	(1)	()	(2)	-
Black-faced Rufous Warbler						
<i>Bathmocercus cerviniventris</i>	-	(1)	()	()	()	-
Dusky Crested Flycatcher						
<i>Trochocercus nigromitratus</i>	-	()	(1)	()	()	-

All these individuals were feeding amongst vegetation swarming with ants, or on the ground among the ants. However, only three species (*Kakamega poliothorax*, *Alethe poliocephala* and *Neocossyphus poensis*) were observed hopping amongst high densities of ants. Other species either sat in vegetation just above the ants and regularly darted into the area below to capture prey items (*Andropadus latirostris*, *Nicator chloris*, *Phyllastrephus terrestris*, *Cossypha cyanocampter*, *Bathmocercus cerviniventris* and *Trochocercus nigromitratus*), or darted into the swarm area from low vegetation or the ground adjacent to the ant swarm (*Bleda syndactyla* and *Cossypha natalensis*). The *Turdoides squamulatus* fed on the ground, at times hopping among low densities of ants, but usually keeping to the swarm's edge.

REFERENCE

WILLIS, E.O. & ONIKI, Y. 1978. Birds and army ants. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 9: 243-263.

F.R. Lambert, *Jabatan Zoologi, Universti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

Received 4 February 1984

Scopus 8: 31-32, March 1984

NOTICES

EAST AFRICAN RARITIES COMMITTEE

The East African Rarities Committee is in the process of being set up as a body distinct from the Ornithological Sub-Committee to deal with records of rare birds from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It will have ten members of which six will be based in East Africa, and four outside, and it will seek advice from non-members with knowledge of certain species when necessary. The East African Rarities Committee may well wish to formulate its own criteria for the acceptance of records, but they are likely to be essentially the same as those set out in the most recent East African Bird Report (*Scopus* 6: 128).

When *Scopus* began in 1977, one of its aims was to be the main vehicle for the publication of distributional data from the three East African countries. This aim has been realized, aided by the appearance in 1980 of *Birds of East Africa*, and will be encouraged in the future. *Scopus* will rely on the judgement, expertise and impartiality of the new Committee in scrutinizing records of rare birds before it publishes them.

The names of the members of the East African Rarities Committee will be published in the June 1984 *Scopus* and in other journals which have sometimes published East African records.

RAPTOR COLLISIONS WITH UTILITY LINES

A call for information

The United States Bureau of Land Management, Sacramento, in co-operation with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, is assembling all available published and unpublished information concerning collisions of raptors with power lines and other utility lines. Actual case histories - no matter how circumstantial or fragmentary - are needed. Please acknowledge that you have such information by writing to Dr Richard R. (Butch) Olendorff, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825, U.S.A. A form on which to record your information will then be sent by return mail.